



Summary Minutes

System Expansion Committee Meeting June 13, 2024

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:31 p.m. by Committee Chair Balducci and was available for viewing in person and online.

The meeting was recorded and can be found at <https://www.soundtransit.org/get-to-know-us/board-directors/livestream-video>.

Roll call of members

Chair	Vice Chair
(P) Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember	(A) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor

Board Members	
(P) Nancy Backus, Auburn Mayor	(P) Bruce Harrell, Seattle Mayor
(P) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor	(P) Jim Kastama, Puyallup Mayor
(P) Cassie Franklin, Everett Mayor	(P) Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive
	(P) Dan Strauss, Seattle Councilmember

Alejandro Monzon, Board Relations Specialist, announced that a quorum of the System Expansion Committee was present at roll call.

Report of the Chair

Agency Progress Report

Chair Balducci noted that a link to the April Agency Progress Report was distributed to members and is available online.

Project Performance Tracker Updates Paused

For the last year, the Committee has received monthly updates on changes to project statuses. In consultation with Chair Balducci and other Board Leadership, staff will be pausing the monthly publication in order to revamp the tracker with more forward-looking metrics.

I-90 East Link Tour for members

Chair Balducci noted that her office and Sound Transit staff are coordinating on a date in early July for a tour of the I-90- segment of the East Link Extension. She noted that staff would be reaching out with additional details as they are finalized.

CEO Report

Interim Chief Executive Officer Goran Sparrman provided the report.

Activation Update

CEO Sparrman thanked Board member Somers and others for joining staff on June 7, 2024 to celebrate entering the last critical step before light rail service can be extended into Lynnwood on August 30, 2024. He noted that planning continues on details for the opening day ribbon cutting events.

Angle Lake Tie in work for Federal Way Link Extension

CEO Sparrman reminded the Committee that the 1 Line is single-tracking between SeaTac and Angle Lake stations for the work to tie-in the overhead centenary system for the Federal Way Link Extension. He noted that an additional full weekend closure of that segment will be needed on June 22-23 to complete the work, following which normal service will resume.

Downtown Redmond Link Extension update

System Integration Testing is progressing on the Downtown Redmond Link Extension, with initial testing underway. CEO Sparrman noted that staff are working to maintain the schedule for a Spring 2025 opening.

Public comment

Chair Balducci announced that public comment would be accepted via email to meetingcomments@soundtransit.org and would also be accepted verbally.

Written public comments:

Edward Miller for the GarageTown Condominium Association
Charles Loeffler
Mary Spielmann
Betty Lau
Eugenio Vidales Jr.

In-person Verbal Public Comments:

Brien Chow
Peter Barbin
Marykate Ryan

Virtual Verbal Public Comments:

No individuals signed-up to provide virtual verbal public comments.

Business items

For Committee Final Action

Minutes: May 9, 2024 System Expansion Committee meeting

It was moved by Board member Strauss, seconded by Board member Backus, and carried by unanimous voice vote that the minutes of the May 9, 2024, System Expansion Committee meeting be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2024-36: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a contract with Stacy & Witbeck, Inc. to provide construction services for the Federal Way Link Extension project for traffic mitigation in the amount of \$11,648,140, with a 20 percent contingency of \$2,329,628, for a total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$13,977,768.

Linneth Riley-Hall, Federal Way Link Extension Executive Project Director, and Mark Palmer, Senior Civil Engineer, gave the staff presentation for this action.

Noting the original low bidder's withdrawal due to sales tax calculations, Chair Balducci asked for confirmation that the selected firm is within the expected price range. Mr. Palmer confirmed the selected contract is within expectations.

It was moved by Board member Strauss, seconded by Board member Backus, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2024-36 be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Resolution No. R2024-15: Splitting the Tacoma Dome Link Extension project into two projects, Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) and Operations and Maintenance Facility South (OMF South), for budgetary, planning, and reporting purposes by (a) amending the TDLE authorized project allocation in the Transit Improvement Plan from \$506,748,000 to \$112,388,021 and the annual Adopted 2024 Budget from \$258,212,000 to \$30,347,000, and (b) establishing the OMF South authorized project allocation at \$394,359,979 and the annual 2024 Budget at \$227,865,000.

Chelsea Levy, Acting Executive Director for Planning, Environment, and Project Development, and Curvie Hawkins, Project Development Director, gave the staff presentation for this action.

Chair Balducci asked whether the truck overhaul and street extension elements of the project are from code requirements. Mr. Hawkins clarified that the road extensions are for permitting conditions, but the truck overhaul facility is for Sound Transit operations.

Chair Balducci asked for additional information on the inclusion of the mainline and test track included in the staff recommended project to be built. Mr. Hawkins responded that the additional mainline track would allow the OMF South to provide vehicles for revenue service by connecting to the terminus of the Federal Way Link Extension and would also be used to the Tacoma Dome Link Extension project. The test track would allow for 24/7 testing and commissioning of light rail vehicles.

Chair Balducci asked about the preferred alternative's comparison to cost and schedule needs. Mr. Hawkins responded that the preferred alternative provides the best opportunity to open the facility for Series 3 light rail vehicle testing. He added that staff have been working since the last project update to address both schedule and cost impacts. The preferred alternative is trending to a 2031-2032 opening, as compared to the original 2029 opening date, and staff are continuing to develop recovery efforts. Similarly, the most recent quantitative risk assessment for the project has produced a cost estimate of \$1.9 billion, which is in line with the financial plan. Additional efforts will continue to be made to reduce cost as applicable.

Ms. Levy noted for the Committee that the test track is an addition of scope as it was not originally conceived as part of the OMF South project.

It was moved by Board member Strauss, seconded by Board member Backus, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2024-15 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Resolution No. R2024-16: Selecting the project to be built for the Operations and Maintenance Facility South project.

Chair Balducci noted information for this action was included in the last presentation.

It was moved by Board member Backus, seconded by Board member Somers, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2024-16 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Motion No. M2024-37: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a Project Administration Agreement with the City of Lynnwood for the Everett Link Extension and OMF North project.

Chelsea Levy, Acting Executive Director for Planning, Environment, and Project Development, and Eric Widstrand, North Corridor Development Director, gave the staff presentation for this action.

Chair Balducci asked whether the partnering agreement is with multiple jurisdictions or just the City of Lynnwood. Mr. Widstrand clarified that a multiple jurisdictional partnering agreement was entered into last year, and this reimbursement agreement is only for the City of Lynnwood.

Chair Balducci inquired into the relationship with local jurisdictions. Mr. Widstrand stated that coordination is advancing well. Board members Somers and Franklin concurred.

It was moved by Board member Franklin, seconded by Board member Somers, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2024-37 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Report from the Technical Advisory Group

Ken Johnsen began the presentation on behalf of the TAG members and noted that others are available virtually to answer applicable questions throughout the presentation. He noted the presentation was also shared with the Executive Committee last week, and that they are excited to bring the information to the System Expansion Committee as well.

Mr. Johnsen noted that with an acting CEO and a newly onboarded DCEO, the TAG expects for their high-level recommendations to be tailored according to their vision of the agency. He reiterated the importance of the Board's decisions to come through a lens of regionalism and the commitment to in-person relationships between staff, the Board, and outside consultants and contractors. He also highlighted the necessity of prioritizing projects over processes. He pivoted to walk through the six high-level recommendations from the TAG's report.

Regarding Recommendation 1 - Trust, Mr. Johnsen highlighted that staff have taken steps to offer staff recommendations at key project points and find avenues to resolve issues at the staff level. Mr. Johnsen stressed the importance of regionalism and looking forward as key to continuing the building of trust.

For Recommendation 2 – Capital Delivery staff, Mr. Johnsen highlighted the key milestone of hiring and onboarding Deputy CEO Mestas. He noted that now that she is in place, it is up to her and CEO Sparrman to build out her team in a way she deems necessary. He added that the original recommendation was a for two deputies for the ST2 and ST3 programs but recognized that may change.

For Recommendation 3 – Decision-making, Mr. Johnsen noted changes to the agency's Change Control Board. The institution had grown as a part of the agency's bureaucracy and was determined to be an unnecessary friction point by the TAG. He also highlighted the development of training for construction managers and resident engineers to create a culture that pushes decision-making down to the lowest possible levels.

For Recommendation 4 – Owner of Choice, Mr. Johnsen first noted that the Washington State Department of Transportation was recently awarded the Owner of Choice award for the Pacific Northwest by Engineering News-Record. He highlighted that work is ongoing in procurement refinements, as organizations tend to lean to more risk-averse procurement methods over time. Mr. Johnsen also called back to a question from Board member Somers at the Executive Committee regarding public-private partnerships and state that the TAG would return with feedback on that topic.

For Recommendation 5 – Betterments, Mr. Johnsen stated that his understanding is that the Board would be taking action on an updated policy later this month. He added that the staff had approached the TAG for feedback during the policy development, and the TAG felt that the policy was consistent with its recommendations.

For Recommendation 6 – FTA, Mr. Johnsen acknowledged the work to continue building and improving the relationship with the Federal Transit Administration. He also noted the importance of maintaining the agency's relationships with the congressional delegation.

In closing, Mr. Johnsen thanked the Board and staff for their engagement and overall dedication to making necessary changes.

Chair Balducci thanked the TAG and its staffers for their work and highlighted the improvements she has been noticing.

Board member Strauss concurred with Chair Balducci and noted his excitement to have advanced an item related to the Everett Link Extension today.

Status of Implementing the Technical Advisory Group recommendations

Moises Gutierrez, Deputy chief executive officer for Program Oversight, and Terri Mestas, Deputy chief executive officer for Capital Delivery, began the presentation by noting an updated version of the tracking table was included in the member's packets. Mr. Gutierrez thanked Mr. Johnsen and the TAG members for their quarterly report and for their ongoing partnership.

For Recommendation 1, Mr. Gutierrez highlighted the development and distribution of the Board Programmatic Work Plan by Board Administrator Katie Flores. He noted that Board members are free to provide feedback as they deem appropriate.

For Recommendation 2, Mr. Gutierrez noted the onboarding of Terri Mestas and the ongoing function review of the entire organization. As the executive leadership structure is in place, the organization hopes to begin functional adjustments by the end of the summer.

For Recommendations 3 and 4 (related to internal improvements), Mr. Gutierrez explained that progress has been made on consistent invoice management, as well as on more timely disposition of change order and project closeout. He noted that Ms. Mestas would be implementing additional reforms within the capital program. Mr. Gutierrez reported that the Change Control Board has been retired and an overhaul process will be in place by the end of the month.

For Recommendation 5, Mr. Gutierrez reported that the Board is expected to consider the updated System Expansion Scope Control and Betterments policy later this month.

For Recommendation 6, Mr. Gutierrez reported that he is working closely with FTA Regional leadership to strengthen and remap Sound Transit's partnership. More updates are expected in the coming months.

Mr. Gutierrez deferred to Ms. Mestas on the future of the work to implement the TAG recommendations. Ms. Mestas thanked the TAG for the feedback and oversight they have provided to both her and Sound Transit staff. She noted the importance of being able to act quickly, both in terms of getting project work completed and of being an owner of choice in the region. She highlighted the implementation of a Project Management Information System to better support reporting and dashboards for clarity. She noted that she has spent time with the contracting community and industry experts to get feedback on improvements that would lead to the agency being an owner of choice.

Chair Balducci thanked staff for their presentation and noted that it seems like work is steadily progressing. She added that while some of the improvements have concrete metrics that can be easily evaluated for performance, there are many that have unclear thresholds for success. She encouraged staff to keep the committee and public apprised of successful implementation.

Presentation on updates to the Sounder South Strategic Plan

Chelsea Levy, Acting Executive Director for Planning, Environment, and Project Development, and Melissa Saxe, Sounder South Project Development Director, began the presentation.

Ms. Levy provided background into the Sounder South Strategic Plan, noting it was first published in April 2020, just after Sounder South had reached its peak demand before the COVID-19 Pandemic. For the last year, staff have been analyzing the post-pandemic ridership trends to update the strategic plan to better reflect the new reality of Sounder South service. She noted that the presentation comes with a request for implicit support for staff to engage with BNSF railway on the possibility of accelerating adding trips along the corridor. This would be a trade-off with first providing additional trains and longer platforms to address what was needed during peak demand prior to the pandemic.

Ms. Saxe noted that the Strategic Plan update has been an opportunity to look at recent data and identify opportunities for potential new Sounder ridership markets, including off-peak service during the day.

Last fall, staff performed community engagement in South King and Pierce Counties and collected over 5,600 survey responses. She added that 40% of those surveyed were non-riders, which is a group that is usually difficult to account for. Key takeaways from the survey included broad support for additional trips over longer trains, longer span of service during weekdays, decreasing peak period frequency for a longer span of service, and the addition of weekend service. Regular riders noted slightly less support for decreased peak frequency, so the data seem to indicate that non-riders are mostly speaking to a demand for service not already provided.

Staff sought to understanding how to better meet the needs of the local communities, especially low-income individuals and people of color. Non-traditional information sets - such as replica cell phone travel data - complimented ORCA card taps on Sounder and nearby bus routes and 2024 King County Rider/Non-rider survey to help round out the data informing this update. The cell phone data demonstrated that plenty of trips occur in the Sounder South corridor when Sounder has no or limited service, indicating that there could be a market for expanded mid-weekday service. Additionally, there appears to be the same number of trips taken on a Saturday and weekdays. ORCA Lift bus taps also show robust transit use in the Sounder South corridor during non-service times. Ms. Saxe summarized the findings by explaining that if additional Sounder South service was provided, there appears to an existing market of riders that could take advantage of increased bi-directional trips.

Sound Transit also conducted a review of 30 peer agencies and noted that peak ridership is down for all systems versus pre-pandemic levels. Overall, other agencies have the same experience with regional rail service as Sound Transit and others are also examining adjusting service to meet new demand patterns.

Ms. Saxe detailed the ridership numbers for Sounder South since beginning service, noting a significant decline due to the pandemic. Riders are returning, but demand has not yet reached pre-pandemic numbers. With the assumption that the number and timing of trips does not change, ridership demand during peak travel hours is not expected to surpass the current capabilities of Sounder South trains, meaning there appears to be less of a need to extend platforms for longer trains by 2036.

Ms. Saxe concluded that the update to the Sounder South Strategic Plan has unearthed an opportunity to reprioritize the improvements to the service by pulling forward work to advance additional roundtrips by 2036 and push back work on extending the platforms by 2046. Ms. Saxe detailed that initial work could include pursuing federal funds and engaging with BNSF on long lead-time easement negotiations. Ms. Saxe reiterated that staff are hoping for the Committee's informal support to begin these discussions that could lead to Board actions should the reprioritization be feasible.

Chair Balducci reiterated the staff request to help orient board member discussion.

Board member Backus expressed support for the additional, using the term of "lifestyle train" service to support those who not only use Sounder service for work commuting. She added that she's look forward to using the Sounder to attend women's sports events as much as the region does Seahawks or Sounders games.

Board member Kastama supported staff devoting time and resources to explore accelerating the timeline for additional trips. He noted a slight preference for weekend service.

Board member Somers expressed support for the work and highlighted that this may also be an opportunity to further build upon the relationship with BNSF for Sounder North service as well.

Board member Strauss expressed support and excitement for additional Sounder trips and echoed Board member Somers's point about expanding the agency's relationship with BNSF.

Chair Balducci also shared her support and noted the consistency of the data with anecdotes she has heard from individuals in the region.

Board member Backus asked for clarification as to whether these additional trips are funded in the ST3 plan. Ms. Levy responded that funds for both the platform extensions and additional trips (which included signal improvements and easement purchases) were included in the ST3 plan.

Executive session - None.

Other business

None.

Next meeting

Thursday, July 11, 2024
1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Board Room &
Virtually via WebEx

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:09 p.m.

ATTEST:

Claudia Balducci
System Expansion Committee Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, AJM.